



**Testimony of the
Commission on Women, Children and Seniors
Commission on Equity & Opportunity
Submitted to the Commerce Committee
February 21, 2019**

RE: H.B. 5576, H.B. 6604, S.B. 854, S.B. 856

Senator Hartley, Representative Simmons, Ranking and other distinguished members of the Commerce Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) & Commission on Equity & Opportunity (CEO) on the above referenced bills.

My name is Steven Hernández, Executive Director of the Commissions on Women, Children & Seniors & Equity & Opportunity. I am joined by our 2GEN Fellow, Ms. Rosa Rada, who I will now ask to provide the bulk of this testimony in favor of several of your proposed bills.

The State of Connecticut and the New England region are experiencing workforce shortages. These shortages are concentrated within the skilled manufacturing sector. Often underpaid and under skilled workers will get stuck in a low-paying job because they do not have avenues or opportunities to acquire critical and necessary training. Workforce research shows that these workers are often young, non-white, and have experienced diminished educational opportunity.

Meanwhile, from Idaho to Mississippi, Portland Oregon to Portland Maine, the skylines of cities and towns are dotted with cranes and their people are finding well-paid work through coordinated high school to workforce pipelines that include Higher Ed as a key participant.

CWCS administers the state's two-generational initiative. Two-gen, or a whole family approach to jobs, recognizes that a family's income determines a child's wellbeing and future prospects. When a parent has a stable, well-paying job, their children thrive and are ready to learn. This is true for every family. To join families in their journey towards economic self-sufficiency and to sustainably break cycles of intergenerational poverty, it is imperative that we adequately provide avenues to train for the jobs available in our state today, and in the future. This is good for CT's residents, its businesses and our state

Regarding S.B. 854 and S.B. 856: These Acts would provide a better understanding of workforce development in our state and ensure public school students are adequately prepared and supported for jobs in the manufacturing sector. CWCS supports efforts to gain insight into how

to better prepare students in our state for well-paying jobs that meet workforce needs. CWCS supports efforts to broaden access to jobs training, especially for students of color and for those in economically distressed areas.

Regarding H.B. 5576 and H.B. 6604: These Acts would develop strategies to retain a high-quality workforce via a new job initiative and through cross-sector collaboration to expand access to jobs training, respectively. CWCS supports efforts to connect workforce needs with students as well as unemployed and underemployed residents.

Gaining a better understanding of our state's workforce needs while adequately preparing all students for success will break cycles of intergenerational poverty and advance the economic well-being of our entire state.

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to working with you on these and your other endeavors.